

INQUIRY INTO BIRTH TRAUMA

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

My experience relates to the birth of my first child at [redacted] Hospital's birthing unit in February 1999. My baby was due on [redacted].

My waters broke at 1am on Sat [redacted]. I called the birthing unit and they suggested I put a pad on and come in. At this stage I had no contractions.

I went in and they tested the fluid in the pad and confirmed it was amniotic fluid.

They monitored the baby for a few hours however there were no contractions. Some hours later the mucus plug had been expelled and the Dr on duty said that because I still had no contractions I should go home "have a rest and wait for the contractions to start." I was sent home around 8am Sat [redacted]. I was told to return to the hospital if contractions began or come in by 5pm that night if I still had no contractions as I would need to be put on antibiotics to avoid infection due to my waters having been broken for so long. As a first time mother - I followed this advice.

I tried to sleep but was too anxious. Still no contractions so went back to the birthing unit at 5pm on Sat [redacted].

I was monitored again (still no contractions) and then sent up to the Maternity Ward to wait until a Dr could see me and decide if I needed antibiotics. Waited all night with no medical attention and getting very anxious by this stage (24 hours since water had broken).

At about 1.30am on Sunday [redacted] - I felt a contraction. This continued for a short time until a nurse came and checked and after another hour or so I was taken down to the birthing unit. By this stage the contractions were very painful and I was absolutely exhausted - having been awake since 1am on Sat [redacted] when my waters first broke.

I struggled to labour. After several hours I ended up having an epidural which numbed me completely to the point where I could not even feel my toes and was unable to push or change positions. The back pain was excruciating and I was vomiting. Eventually the Dr on duty was called and he wanted to try forceps. I refused. Eventually the Dr said we could try vacuum extraction. He tried three times to use vacuum extraction to help my baby come out. I was told if it did not work the third time - then I would be having an emergency caesarian.

My baby was posterior, large (ended up being 9 and a half pound and 55cm long) and I was absolutely exhausted and could barely push by this point. Remember my waters had broken at 1am on Saturday [redacted]. My son was eventually born at 6.45pm on Sunday [redacted] - so I had been in labour for almost 42 hours.

When he was born he only scored a 4 or 5 on the Apgar test and he had a huge cone shaped lump on the side of his skull.

I had a third degree tear - and was unable to comfortably have intercourse for months as a result.

My baby and I were then taken to a maternity ward and two days later he became ill with a 40 degree temperature. A friend had to go and find a nurse and insist something was wrong. The nurse response was to "undress him". Once I demanded a paediatrician attend - my baby was given antibiotics for an infection - I have always believed he probably got that infection as he had been inside me for more than a day after my waters broke.

I suffered from mastitis a few days after and was also put on antibiotics and I ended up being diagnosed with post natal depression which has impacted my life in many ways including my ability to bond with my first born child.

I was extremely traumatised by this experience and am still traumatised 24 years after my son's birth.

Soon after his delivery I joined a private health fund so future children could be delivered by my own obstetrician.

I would not recommend anybody deliver their baby in a public hospital or without their own obstetrician.